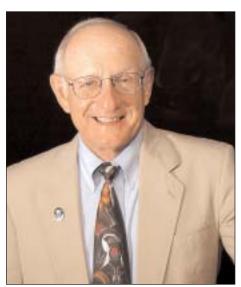


MATTERS OF OPINION



Dean Hildebrand

I want to express my deep appreciation to hunters and landowners who have done so much to help us manage North Dakota's deer herd. This year, I am asking you to do even more.

This deer season we could possibly harvest the most deer ever in our state's history. To make this happen, several things need to come into play: The weather needs to cooperate to allow for good hunting conditions; landowners need to allow more hunters on their land than ever before; and hunters need to apply for additional doe licenses. We need to continue to build on the great progress we have made with landowners by showing respect, admiration, and appreciation to those who make it possible for us to hunt their land.

There was a time, not too many years ago, when the North Dakota Game and Fish Department encouraged hunters to take bucks only during the hunting season. It was a time when our deer numbers were extremely low and the Department was trying to build the herd. The most effective management method we had was the preservation of does so they could produce more offspring. With better conditions, and a bent on hunting bucks only, our formula worked. It worked so well that we now must take a different management approach – to instill in our hunters the importance of harvesting more does. We need to gain the support of hunters to help us in this effort. We must try to instill a change in attitude.

I understand how the wily, old buck provides a special challenge to hunters. Those who are seeking trophy animals make a tremendous effort to meet this challenge. What I am asking is for hunters to take a doe or two during their hunt. Your effort will go a long way toward enabling us to meet our management objective of 100,000 deer

licenses each year, which, we believe, provides a sound balance, while still providing great hunting opportunities. It also provides relief for those who farm and ranch.

Several factors, mild winters included, have greatly increased recruitment in the state's deer herd over the years. In 2004, we made available 145,250 deer licenses to hunters, nearly all of which were sold. This fall, deer licenses numbers increased again. If we could sell all licenses available – with a successful hunting season to follow – it would put us well on the road toward meeting our objective.

It is paramount we reduce North Dakota's deer herd. In certain areas of the state, we have met our objective. In other areas, we are striving for a greater harvest. The number of deer-vehicle collisions on state roadways needs to be reduced, and we are heading that way. A greater harvest this fall by hunters would help make for better hunting in the long-term, and elicit greater cooperation with those who suffer depredation and deervehicle accidents.

I am asking our hunters to make a special effort to harvest more does. If you have an abundance of venison, you might consider donating it to those less fortunate. There are individuals, senior citizen centers, religious organizations and others that would be appreciative of your success.

I would much rather use hunterlandowner cooperation to make things happen rather than have it mandated by legislative direction.

Again, thank you for your outstanding past performance, and willingness to step forward this fall and do a bit more. Get that extra license and help us meet a balanced formula we all can live with.

Near Helderage

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